

# PASTORAL LETTER

*By Richard Cardinal Cushing*

Archbishop of Boston

# THE CALL OF THE COUNCIL



THE HOLY SEASON OF LENT, 1962



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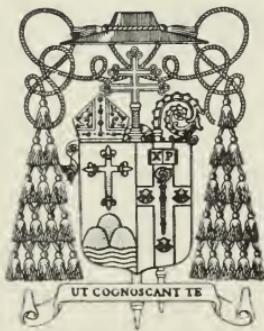
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## THE CALL

### OF

## THE COUNCIL



THE HOLY SEASON OF LENT, 1962

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# THE CALL OF THE COUNCIL

Christ yesterday and today, the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and Omega: to Him belong all time and eternity. To Him be glory and dominion through eternal ages. Amen.

(EASTER LITURGY)

## I.

### *Introduction*

The Christian lives out his life in a world that is "charged with the grandeur of God." There are truly divine mysteries set before man which words will never make plain to us and these we accept in the understanding of the abyss which lies between men and God. There are however some problems which face the Christian and the Church, Christ's extension in time, for which solutions must be found in time. Within the family of the Church there are always movements promoting one or another action or expression of belief as especially fruitful for the apostolate at a particular moment. This will continue to be true until the family of the Church and the family of man are coextensive. In every age a judgment must be given as to what specific actions are indicated for that generation. In the things that touch us constantly and closely in our religious expression, we look for a voice that sounds no uncertain note but that is confident and clear. Such is the voice that this year will speak to us and our world; it is the voice of the Church in Council.

"The Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of truth" grows in her understanding of herself and in the expression of the truths of which she is custodian. The Second Council of the Vatican will be the formal bringing together of all the churches, which separately and together are the Body of Christ.

Amid a diversity of tongues there will be in the Council a unity of mind and heart, a renewal of that

day when with tongues of flame and the sound of a great wind, the Church was constituted at Pentecost. "When He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will teach you all truth." The sacred and the secular are different realms, but they are found mingled together in each human life. The Council, in those things on which it will speak, will address itself to the total human personality, man sinning and man redeemed, man in the order of the world and man in the order of the sacred.

When a Council meets, history is recalled from the Councils of times past and history is made for the years ahead. Each Council has its symbol, its profession of Faith, in which its commitment to the past is unmistakably outlined. The context in which the Council itself is called makes clear what is its promise for the future. The emphasis for the Vatican Council this year is *renewal*, the renewal of the Church and the renewal of Christian life. Pope John himself has struck the note in a litany of texts which inspire us to "make all things new."

The Council partakes in a special fashion of the personality of the Chief Shepherd of Christendom who presides over it. How better could we describe good Pope John, gloriously reigning, than in his own description of Pope St. Leo the Great, "Exceptional gifts as a man of government, that is, an enlightened and supremely practical spirit, a will ready for action, firm and well matured decisions, a great heart open to paternal understanding and full of that charity which St. Paul indicated to all Christians as the better way. How can one not recognize that these sentiments of justice and of mercy, of strength joined with clemency were born in his heart precisely out of that same charity that the Lord required of Peter before entrusting to him the custody of His lambs and His sheep?"

In this Council the Church will meet all the many problems of a divided world; in it will meet all the Bishops of the Church who witness that "grace and

truth have come to us through Jesus Christ," and chief among these Bishops the one who calls himself the Servant of the Servants of God. The Holy Spirit of God will hover over its deliberations and direct its destiny, that eternal Spirit through whom truth is made plain and wisdom revealed.

We also turn *our* thoughts in these pages to the Vatican Council, we study its nature and functioning, its opportunities and hopes for renewal among our people. In a special way, through this pastoral letter, I wish to make each person in the archdiocese individually associated with the Council's labors and its aims. His Holiness has called us all to join with him in prayer and sacrifice so that God's holy inspiration will bring to new success this extraordinary gathering of the successors of the Apostles around the throne of Peter.

## II.

### *The Nature of the Council*

In the ordinary, day-to-day government of the Church, each bishop resides in his own diocese, teaching and ruling the local church committed to his care. While doing this he is also acting always as a member of the episcopal college to which the care both of the Church universal and of each local church has been divinely entrusted. It is in this way that the universal Church and the local church are in constant contact; in this way, too, the universal Church, in its office of ruling and teaching, and in its ministry of divine grace, is brought into daily contact with every one of its members throughout the world.

Occasionally, however, pressing concerns can arise in the life of the Church which demand an extraordinary response. Such emergencies can affect the understanding of the faith itself, as in the definition of dogma, or they may be concerned rather with the application of the faith to daily practice in the field of morals.

Sometimes it is a question of the Church's internal reform through disciplinary legislation; at other times the great need of the moment is the reconciliation of dissident Christian bodies.

When a crisis of this sort presents itself, one of the historic responses of the Church has been the convocation of a council. In response to the summons of their chief, the Supreme Pontiff, the bishops of the world leave their respective local churches and gather together with him in order to give him the aid of their learning, experience, and judgment in meeting the demands of the present emergency. Then, in his name and in their own, they proclaim to the whole Church and to the whole world, what is true Catholic faith and practice.

If we look back through the centuries of the Church's life, we can see at once the part played by the councils of the past in meeting the emergencies of their day. The fourth and fifth century councils of Nicaea, of Ephesus, of Chalcedon, for instance, clarified and formulated the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, and of the divine motherhood of Mary at a time when dissension over these doctrines, in the closely knit social structure of those days, was already disrupting both Church and State. The eighth ecumenical council was the first to touch upon the relationship of Church to State, a matter resumed by the First Lateran Council (1123) in its condemnation of lay investiture. In the Middle Ages, the first four Lateran Councils were all concerned with the reform of discipline within the Church, and the fourth (1215) is also noted as having formulated for the first time the obligation of the Easter communion. The reunion of Christendom was a prime objective of several councils: Constance (1414) successfully healed the Great Western Schism; Lyons II (1245) and Florence (1439) did the same temporarily for the Byzantine schism. Trent (1542) might conceivably have been instrumental in further stemming the Protestant

division had the Lutheran leaders accepted the invitation extended to them to attend the council. The main work of the Council of Trent, however, was to give us our present defined teaching and theological principles on grace and the sacraments, particularly on Penance and on the Eucharist, in the face of the Protestant preaching on these and related topics which was rending all Europe. Finally, the Vatican Council, nearly one hundred years ago, found itself confronting a world infected by secularism, pseudo-rationalism, and a total rejection of the supernatural element in human life; the council was the Church's solemn refutation of this attack on the very basis of all religion and of all social stability.

There is, then, in general, a constantly recurrent need for a restatement in human language of the divine truths. When God speaks to man, he must do so in human terms and against the existing cultural background; to do otherwise would be to expose the divine message to the danger of misunderstanding. In the course of time, therefore, the word of God must be translated and interpreted anew, and phrased in the terms of contemporary cultures; the eternal word must be adapted to temporal needs in order that the eternal purpose may be fulfilled in time. So also the teaching of the Church, her authentic formulation of these eternal truths in temporal terms, stands in constant need of restatement in the context and the categories of human culture as these evolve, in order that all men of all times may hear her voice and find salvation in her body.

Even for the individual Catholic to make that restatement in his own words is sometimes necessary in the daily exercise of parental, academic, or parochial instruction. To make a statement of faith, however, which will be authentic, just as authoritative as the ultimate Source of faith, can be the office only of the Church to which has been entrusted both the commission to teach and the guarantee of infallibility in the execution of that commission. The Church discharges

this office, ordinarily, by the daily teaching of her bishops scattered throughout the world, or at special times, by the instrumentality of a council.

What, then, is an *ecumenical* council? We could define it today as an assembly, in accordance with the provisions of canon law, of the bishops of the universal Church for the solemn exercise of their teaching and ruling offices. These offices were entrusted by Christ to the apostolic college exclusively and the bishops of the Church, as successors of the apostles, exclusively exercise these offices today. A council, therefore, is an assembly of the Church's teachers and rulers, and only they are eligible to vote as judges of faith with a "decisive vote", as it is called.

The bishops attend the council as representing their various local churches, to the faith of which they bear witness before their fellow-bishops. It would be a grave error, however, to limit the role of the bishop in council to this merely representative function. The episcopate is essentially a collegiate entity, and the Church is governed by this collegiate body, both the universal Church and each local church. So it is that the individual bishop is the local representative of a universal college in the routine administration of his diocese to a far greater extent than he is representative of a local church to the college on the rare occasions of conciliar assembly. And because the ruler of the Church is a collegiate body, the First Vatican Council stated truly that the Supreme Pontiff, the head of that college, exercises everywhere and over each member of the Church a jurisdiction which is "truly episcopal."

Although others than bishops may be invited to the council, as the present law provides, it is still obvious that the ultimate validity of the conciliar acts arises from the fact that they proceed from the episcopal college gathered together under its divinely constituted head, the Supreme Pontiff. The authority of the college and the validity of its acts are however the same,

whether the members are gathered together in one place or dispersed over the earth in their respective churches. The gathering of the members one with another is a merely accidental matter, whereas the proximate rule of faith in the Catholic Church is the ordinary daily teaching of the bishops in their moral unanimity.

While the conciliar arrangement contributes greatly to learning in the formulation of doctrine, to solemnity in its promulgation, and to universality in its diffusion, it still cannot be considered truly necessary to the discharge of the Church's teaching office. Nowhere do we find Christ or the apostles prescribing councils; nor can any instrument be truly necessary for the fulfillment of the Church's primary duty of teaching "all men" which has been invoked only twenty times in nearly two thousand years.

How, then, did councils come into being? Long before the conversion of the Empire in the fourth century, local synods were a familiar instrument of Church government. Such synods were held simply because the bishops of a certain province or district had problems in common, and considered quite naturally that they could solve their problems more efficiently in concert than by individual action. After the conversion of the Empire, the problems of the Church concerned also the state; the political unity of the Empire became closely interwoven with the doctrinal unity of the Church. In these circumstances, it was clearly to the advantage of the Empire to facilitate uniformity of action among the bishops of the whole Church. On the invitation of the emperor, therefore, and often at the expense of his treasury, the local synods of an earlier age were simply expanded into councils of the whole Church, called "ecumenical" because in theory they represented the entire "inhabited" (oikoumene) earth.

Although councils, therefore, are a purely human invention, and not entirely even an ecclesiastical one, they afford a brilliant illustration of the Church's vital-

ity, of her ability to adapt to her own lofty purposes the techniques and instruments of this world, to use human means for divine ends. And this vitality of the Church is the fruit of the indwelling within her of the Holy Ghost, her divine Principle of life, the Soul of her body, who, as Pius XII wrote "through His heavenly grace is the Principle of every supernatural act in all parts of the Body". (*Mystici Corporis*) It is for this reason that His Holiness, Pope John, compared his projected council to "a new Pentecost", a gathering of the successors of the apostles, to be instinct with that same divine Spirit who once quickened and enlightened the Twelve.

### III.

#### *The Contemporary Crisis*

Although every age may be called critical for those who must live out their allotted time in that period, there are some moments in human history which are fraught with a special peril. It is difficult to believe that these years of the middle twentieth century are not of this special type. Last year in our pastoral letter we analyzed in some detail the forces which have directed the thinking of vast numbers of people in the modern world and which have led to the alienation of man from God. It will not be necessary to review the subject here except to emphasize the moral bankruptcy which leaves the contemporary generation stricken and weak before the encroaching claims of the world. Whether one refers to this in terms of "secularism" or "humanism", or whatever else, by it we understand an estrangement setting a chasm between man and his Creator which must be bridged if man in the full sense is to survive. The breakdown in moral values of which we wrote a year ago stands at the root of the problem and from it a lethal poison penetrates extensive areas of modern society.

Moreover, we must recall that the Church itself lives in the world and must meet the changing climate of each historic period with renewed vigor. In this way,

in times past, the Church had to adjust to the expanding empire of ancient Rome and its decline; in this way it sanctified the migration of nations on the Continent of Europe; so it met the calm of the Middle Ages and the burst of the Renaissance by bringing from its spiritual riches new forces of grace and action in the religious orders; in this way also today the Church faces a new world, contracted and fragmentized, looking for faith and hope beyond the powers of man and technology.

If our modern world seems smaller than formerly, this does not at all suggest that it is easier to comprehend. So many competing voices are calling for man's attention, so many new directions opening to his mind, so many changes upsetting established human ways—man cannot be anything but confused unless somewhere the eternal is put into relation with time. This is the context in which Pope John assembles the teaching Church, bringing into focus the claims of God upon created things and calling every Christian to his knees and every man to prayer.

The very life of the Church as intended by her Founder must be thought of as a continuing growth in which she realizes more and more his divine plan for salvation. There is thus a dynamism by which the Church itself acts and grows with an inner life that is of divine origin. It would be a mistake to think of the role of the Church as one that only responds to the demands of a changing world; it develops too through its own interior life and by this increase keeps pace, and more, with the movements of men and history.

No one can measure the depthless resources which the Lord has placed in his Church; from these, in the ways of Providence, come new vigor and inspiration, new meaning and relevance, new ways of grace and action, so that the freshness of each new hour is matched by the eternal youth of the Church, belonging as it does to every age and time and yet itself ageless and forever young.

We must not suppose, however, that our changing world has been watched without concern by the Church, as an observer might watch a contest in which he had no stake. On the contrary the Church has continually marshalled from its own resources new techniques and new inspirations for failing humanity. Thus, when man began to be separated from grace by the secular errors of the nineteenth century, the Church not only condemned the heresies of the "new science" but called her sons to her altars in a new devotion to the Divine Presence. This new emphasis on the Eucharist and the liturgical life was able to pour back into an anemic world the very Blood of Christ and invigorate the Christian life everywhere.

The very structure of the Church weighted with the centuries was also reinforced in these years of peril by a revision of the entire code of Canon Law as the Church girded herself for action and gave new order to her institutional life. In the meantime the progress of scholarship and learning had brought its strong light to bear in the ancient pages of the Scriptures. With holy zeal the Church commissioned her sons to a new study of the sacred writings in order to be second to none in pursuit of the truth revealed to man by God. With all of this and the widespread emergence of mass education, it became necessary to find new techniques for the teaching of religious truth better matched to the popular mind and the new understanding of the learning process. The extraordinary success of modern catechetics illustrates again the ability of the Church to rephrase its message with a new edge as the passage of time dulls the force of the familiar phrase. These years have also seen the rise of the secular institute and the lay missionary as new and providential apostolates for the confrontation of the world and the spirit in a manner suitable to the times. The very size and extension of the Church, the trials of its people, the spirit of clergy and laity, the problems facing the young, and the pace of

modern living—all these from within the Christian family have been newly altered in ways that could not have been foreseen a hundred years ago.

This then is a moment when the Holy Father asks the Church and all its members to look upon themselves and to relate in a new intimacy the ancient Revelation of Christ with human living. A process of self-analysis like this one is likely to be difficult, for it is not a situation in which objectivity is to be presumed. But unless candor opens our minds and charity our hearts, it can be a fruitless task—and worse than fruitless: self-deceiving.

Add to all of this the durable perils which society has built up about us and which by their very massive character seem to crush the spirit of man. Technology grows on every side, with automation ready to make man its victim and profit ready to make him its slave. Pleasure captures the center of human living and ease that leads to luxury softens the strength of the human will. If “secularism” has dominated men’s minds, gratification has sapped the vigor of men’s souls.

In the meantime, for the first time in human history, an organized world movement against God has not merely been set in motion but made half the world its prisoner. On the postulates of atheism and materialism, a new explanation of man and history has promised the world to its followers, and shown the rest of men that might can win over right and honor can yield to evil. “The spectre of communism”, of which Marx spoke a hundred years ago does not now merely haunt the world, but in flesh and blood, in men and arms, it seeks to make that world its own. Nor have the years been unkind to its claims, as through conspiracy and duplicity, through evil men and evil ways, even ancient Christian peoples have been brought to ruin.

Small wonder then that the Vicar of Christ, gazing out upon a troubled world, calls the successors of the Apostles to his side, like the Lord himself in the upper room. At a time when human existence sinks toward

the sub-human, someone must come forth to reassert the claims of the supernatural. In a world of power and blood, of violence and anxiety, of dread and death, someone must speak of a new life and a new hope. On the pile of broken treaties and uncounted betrayals, there must be raised again for the inspiration of mankind the authentic promises of Jesus Christ.

## IV.

### *The Conciliar Purposes*

#### 1. GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

In our day, then, the Church sees a seriously confused world in the midst of far-reaching changes. As mankind is carried towards a new order, great tasks await the Church. One fact is clear beyond the shadow of any doubt: the contemporary crisis, as we have described it above, is in its roots one and the same the world over. This fact challenges the Church today to assert her own supernatural oneness and her own catholicity as well. This is the test the Church confronts as it convokes the Second Vatican Council.

What are the aims of the Council? Pope John has described them at length in the first encyclical letter which he addressed to the Catholic world on Truth, Unity and Peace. The more specific concerns of the Council have also been outlined by the Pontiff; they "will be the growth of the Catholic Church, the renewal of the spirit of the gospel in the hearts of people everywhere, and the adjustment of Christian discipline to the exigencies of modern-day living." In November of 1960, in an address to those who had been meeting in Rome to initiate the work of the Council, Pope John insisted that "everything that the new Ecumenical Council is to do is really aimed at restoring to full splendor the simple and pure lines that the face of the Church of Jesus had at its birth, and at presenting it as its Divine

Founder made it." The Church "as a mother . . . present to every human event . . . as adorned with beauty ever new, who shines with new brilliance, bears new palms . . ." must also be described as "still a long way from the point where it will be transported into an eternity of triumph." Thus, the highest and noblest aim of the Ecumenical Council "is to pause a little in a loving study of the Church and try to rediscover the lines of her more fervent youth and to reconstruct them in a way that will reveal their power over modern minds that are tempted and deceived by the false theories of the prince of this world, the open or hidden adversary of the Son of God, Redeemer and Savior."

These, then, are the aims of the forthcoming Council, as Our Holy Father himself describes them. He has repeatedly asserted that he is expecting great results from the Council; that the work of the Council will bring back greater vigor to faith, to doctrine, to Church discipline, and to spiritual life. As a result of the Council's work, as Pope John sees it, the clergy will shine on every level with a new holiness; Christian doctrine will be brought to the people in the best possible manner; young people will be given "the fresh seeds whose growth holds the hope of a better age", and a sound training in how to live exemplary lives; the activities of the social apostolate will be fostered; a deep missionary spirit will be nourished; all Christians the world over will grow in that kind of spirit "that will make it clear to everyone that each and every person is our brother and our friend." Then it will come to pass that the Church will exhibit to the world a remarkable display of truth, unity and love, a display which even those who are cut off from the Apostolic See will not fail to observe. Then will be realized Pope John's sincere hope that those who are not members of the Church will recognize in this sight a gentle invitation to seek and to acquire that unity which Jesus Christ prayed for so ardently to his heavenly Father.

Here in our pastoral letter, on the advice of the Holy Father, we pause briefly "in a loving study of the Church." Unless we attempt to deepen our understanding of the true nature of the Church, we cannot hope to join our bishops in prayer and work for the Council, we cannot even hope to comprehend the workings of the Council itself. The traditional teaching of Christian doctrine as we all have known it places before our attention the great and mysterious realities of God, Christ and the Church. God comes to man through Christ. Christ comes to man through the Church. "It is through the Church", one contemporary theologian writes, "that we know the divine graciousness whereby we are saved and in which we believe." To believe means to be connected with the Church, to be attached to the Church. As a result of that attachment, the Christian loves Christ and thereby loves God. To know the Church then is to know the Lord; to receive the teachings of the Church is to listen to the divine teacher himself; to live the life of the Church is to share through divine grace in the life that is proper to God.

Even Catholics may be surprised to know that it is not easy to give an adequate and fully satisfying definition of the great reality which is the Church of Christ! The Scriptures speak of the Church in many different images; the Body of the Lord, the people of God, the kingdom of heaven, the one sheepfold, the spouse of Christ, the temple of God, the true vine, and a host of others. The earliest Christians did not often discourse on the nature of the Church, certainly not in any systematic manner. To them the Church was *the* great reality in their lives, a reality that prolonged in time and space the very work and mission of Jesus. For them this was something to live and love, not to analyze. In recent centuries, however, it has become necessary to place new emphasis on a theology of the Church in response to the errors and difficulties of those who have denied the visible aspects of the Church, and called

into question the Christ-conferred authority of the Holy Father and the bishops of the Catholic world.

The Baltimore catechism, so familiar to our younger days, describes the Church as the congregation of all baptized persons united in the same faith, the same sacrifice, and the same sacraments, under the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff and the bishops in union with him. This of course is a good definition, but in its attempt to reply to certain definite errors about the Church, it does not sufficiently focus our attention on the vital interior life of the Church. Since the time of the First Vatican Council, Catholic theologians have been working mightily to put into language a theology of the Church of Christ which will show forth in all their truth those aspects which are essential to the *external* structure of the visible Church and also those aspects which are essential to the *internal* life of the Church.

A high point in this effort came in 1943 when Pope Pius XII wrote his now famous encyclical on the Church as the Mystical Body. "As He hung upon the cross, Christ Jesus not only avenged the justice of the Eternal Father . . . but He won for us, his brothers, an unending flow of graces." It was possible for Him personally, immediately, to impart these graces to men; but He wished to do so only through a visible Church which would be formed by the union of men, so that through that Church every man would work with Him in the dispensing of the graces of the Redemption. "If we would define and describe this true Church of Jesus Christ—which is the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church—we shall find no expression more noble, more sublime or more divine than the phrase which calls it the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ." (Pope Pius XII)

The Church is called "the Body" because it is one and visible. Like the human body, it has many members—all the truly baptized who profess the same faith and who have not withdrawn from body-unity or for

grave faults been excluded by legitimate authority. All these members—bishops and priests, religious, families, lay apostles—together form the organic structure of the Body and help one another by the variety of their functions. Furthermore, just as the human body is given the means to provide for its life, health and growth, so the Savior has provided for the Body which is his Church by endowing it with the seven sacraments “so that by so many consecutive, graduated graces, as it were, its members should be supported from cradle to life’s last breath, and that the social needs of the Church might also be generously provided for.” (Pope Pius XII)

The Church is called the Body of *Christ* because Christ is the founder of the Church. Our divine Redeemer began the building of the Church by his preaching and he completed it when he hung glorified on the cross. He manifested and proclaimed it when he sent the Holy Ghost in visible form upon his disciples. The Church bears the name of Christ because Christ is head of the Body. Just as the head holds the human body together in life and unity, so Christ as head sustains and unifies his Church. Christ too is the support of the Body, guiding and directing it personally in an invisible manner, but represented visibly by his vicar the Pope and the Catholic bishops who rule their flock in Christ’s Holy Name. Finally, the Church is called Christ’s Body because He has purchased his members with his precious blood. He is indeed the Savior of all men, but especially of all the faithful.

The Church is called the *Mystical* Body of Christ to distinguish the Church—a society whose head and ruler is Christ—from the physical body of Christ which, born of the Virgin Mother of God, now sits at the right hand of the Father, and among us rests hidden under the Eucharistic veil. The word “mystical” in no way means invisible, because the visible elements of the Church are as essential as the invisible or interior, for both are equally divinely decreed. Nor should the word

“mystical” be thought of as excluding sinners from the Church; the sight of the members of the Church who are spiritually ill should stimulate rather than lessen our love for the Church, as Pius XII reminded us.

The implications of this teaching are far-reaching. The Church is called the Mystical Body of Christ to express strongly and vividly to our minds the essential truth that all the members of the Church are united by the most wonderful of supernatural bonds with one another and with Christ, their Head, thus resembling the members and head of the living human body.

It is important not to confuse the image with the reality which the image portrays. This supernatural reality is the intimate union which binds Christ and Christians, a visible union with Christ in his vicar, an invisible union in the virtues of one faith, one hope, one love. It is a union through the Holy Ghost who by his heavenly graces is the principle of every supernatural act in all parts of the Body, who is personally present and divinely active in all the members, who so provides for the constant growth of the Church that Pope Leo XIII could write: “As Christ is the Head of the Church, so is the Holy Ghost her soul.”

Our Lord first taught his apostles this great mystery by likening Himself to the vine and them to the branches. The idea is this. There is but one life in the plant, and it is common to both vine and branches. There is but one life in the human body, and it is common to head and members. There is one life in the Church, and it is common to Jesus, as Head, and to all of us as members. What is this life? It is the life of grace and the virtues of faith, hope and love. It is divine life. It is the Christ-life. It is our real share in the life of God.

Little wonder that Pope Pius XII could write: “St. Paul calls the Church ‘Christ’ without adding anything more. Indeed if we are to believe Gregory of Nyssa, the Church is often enough called ‘Christ’ by the

Apostle, and you are conversant with that phrase of St. Augustine: 'Christ preaches Christ.' " The great preacher Bossuet could say: "The Church is Jesus Christ diffused and communicated;" the Church is the Son of God himself, manifested eternally among men in human form, perpetually renewed and forever young—the lasting Incarnation of the Son of God.

The mystery of the Church fascinates the Christian soul for in looking upon it we see the very mystery of Christ. The Second Vatican Council, to satisfy the yearning of our hearts, will take up the unfinished business of the First Vatican Council in this matter of a "theology of the Church." The earlier Council began the work by defining the position and powers of the Supreme Pontiff. The Second Vatican Council must now do the same thing in delineating with new insight the position and authority of the bishops.

Surely too we can expect the coming Council to guide us effectively in a true understanding of the position of the laity. A most salutary effort for the good of the Mystical Body would be realized if the Council promulgated a searching declaration on the significance of the layman in the life of the Church. What we have said in brief about the nature of the Mystical Body makes us aware that we all are members of the Body, that all Christians are called by baptism to belong to the Church. This is not in some secondary sense, not as passive objects to be cared for, but truly active members of the Body of Christ. The laity are members who must take the initiative in the areas of their special concerns, which are the areas of the temporal; the laity, it must be remembered, along with the members of the hierarchy, are *co-responsible* for the Church.

This notion of every member's co-responsibility for the Church suggests a new way in which we should regard the mission and the missions of the Church. *Every* Christian, along with laboring for his own salvation, must perform with Christ a work of collaboration

in dispensing the graces of the Redemption. This is the essential mission of the Church. The "missions", as we use the phrase, represent the extensive and intensive efforts of the Mystical Body in carrying out its essential function. In this regard, we must bear in mind that the frontiers of the Church are not "way off in farthest lands." Rather, the frontiers of the Church pass through each member of the Church and seek to enclose within the boundaries of the Church all that is pure and holy, leaving outside only that which is sin and stain. The missions are the practical expression of the unity of the Church: "one body and one spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and throughout all and in us all." The missions testify to the catholicity of the Church. The Church of Christ is Greek to the Greeks, barbarian to the barbarians, Arab to the Arabs, Negro to the Negroes, Indian to the Indians, Chinese to the Chinese. It is all things to all men, for in its wide embrace, race, color, geography, social class, and every human difference disappears. Every man is our brother—for whom Jesus died!

The Church, then, is truly a mysterious reality, one unlike all other societies known to man. It is essential at all times to reflect deeply and prayerfully on its nature. Pope John has called us in these days to look upon that Church which was placed in history by the very hand and word of the Son of God. He urges us to study its every feature, know its deepest nature, and in a spirit of holy affection wipe away anything that could deform or disfigure its essential beauty. What this means for each of us, as we have seen, is to look fervently on the face of Christ, make his ways our own, and let every living soul see in his Church the undeniable image of its divine Founder.

## 2. RENEWAL OF THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL

A second purpose given by the Holy Father for the Vatican Council is "the renewal of the spirit of the Gospel in the hearts of people everywhere." The gospel is the proclamation of God's word brought to this earth by the eternal Son of God; it is the good news of God's love and of man's salvation; it is the message of redemption effected by the Son made man, our Mediator with the heavenly Father; it is our call from God to live in union with Him, sharers of his life and of his love.

Jesus Christ was not merely present and active among men during the brief span of years that He was seen walking this earth two thousand years ago. We have seen how He is still with us, proclaiming the good news, applying to each generation the saving benefits of redemption, uniting us with Himself in the love of the Father. Christ is present and active in his Church, his Mystical Body, as we have already described at some length.

At the present time there is a renewed appreciation of Sacred Scripture as the word of God addressed to us here and now in a living way. The religious controversies of an earlier day had forced attention on specific doctrines that were under assault and on certain pertinent Scripture texts supporting acceptance of these doctrines. In moral teaching also, the Scriptures were searched for admonitions and examples, useful in opposing evil ways and in fostering virtue. These procedures still have value, when properly used, but with them another approach to Sacred Scripture is possible and is being given emphasis in our day. We might call this approach a simple listening to the word of God, letting Him propose the topics on which we should dwell, letting Him form our minds and hearts. It is a more expansive reading of the sacred word, not simply for lists of doctrines and precepts, but for the whole story of God's wonderful works, his mercy and his fidelity in his dealings with men. In this read-

ing we are formed by his word to make the proper response to his love; we are enlightened by the Holy Ghost whose grace guides us in our reading. This grace of the Spirit is in us both by his own indwelling presence and by the infallible teaching of the Church, the divinely appointed guardian of the sacred books.

As we hear in this manner of the Son of God in Bethlehem we find in this story not only arguments for his divinity, for the virginity and divine maternity of Mary, and other doctrines—along with the example of his poverty and other moral lessons—but we also become more deeply conscious of the fact that in his coming the divine and human have been brought into a marvelous union that still endures in his Church. In hearing the sacred story told within the Church's celebration of his coming, we come to see the depths of its meaning for us. The exhortations which we hear in the gospels are addressed to all times. Christ in his Church still points the way to virtue and he infuses into men's souls the strength to resist the powers of evil and to regulate their lives, both individually and in society, according to divine law. The miracles recorded in the gospels are not only proofs of his divine power but also signs of the wonderful works He performs now among men, raising men up from the death of sin, curing the spiritually blind and lame, feeding men with the bread of heavenly truth and life.

By his sacrifice on the cross, so movingly described by the Evangelists, Christ our Lord atoned for men's sins and by his Resurrection He became "the first-born from the dead," the source of eternal salvation for us. Man need not be subdued by the power of evil; society need not be dominated by forces that would reduce it to chaos. Man has been redeemed and the Redeemer lives in our midst; He it is who gives man the light and the strength he needs to live according to the plans of the Creator, whose will is that men share in his glory.

Within the Church there has developed in recent years a deeper appreciation of the ways in which the transforming power of the Redemption is to be brought to bear on the lives of men, how they can come to realize its meaning more deeply and participate more fully in its benefits. This is seen in a number of movements which make up a renewal of the Christian life now in process. It is for the coming Council to clarify, strengthen and give new impetus to all aspects of this renewal. Our preparation for the Council, as well as the pledge of our readiness to follow the decrees and accept the teaching that will issue from it, will consist in large part in our zeal to participate in the existing renewal of the Church as it is already progressing. We should live with the thought that the spirit of the gospel did not cease to exist with the end of the apostolic times. What is called "the tradition of the Church" is this same evangelical spirit expressing itself in every age and translating into contemporary language the sacred writings and their implications for Christians. In this sense the call of Pope John to a "renewal of the spirit of the gospels" is not merely a summons to look back to the primitive Church but it urges us as well to examine the apostolic response of the Church in every generation and make its application to our own.

Christ our Lord, on the night before He died, gave to his Church the sacraments in which we would be united with him in the continual offering of his Sacrifice to the heavenly Father and would be maintained in living unity through the eating of the sacrificial meal, which is his own Body once and for all time sacrificed for us. In the years since the last ecumenical council an outstanding development in the life of the Church has been the revival of active and conscious participation in the Holy Sacrifice, both in the offering of the Sacrifice and in frequent reception of Holy Communion. This is not a matter simply of external practices but of a renewal of faith and devotion.

The revival of frequent Communion came first and it was the achievement of Pope St. Pius X. He was able to remove from the over-timid hearts of the faithful a misguided awe, a wrong type of fear, which had kept them from approaching Christ regularly in this Sacrament. The Lord gives Himself to us in Holy Communion as the food and medicine of our souls; He comes as the merciful Savior, the sympathetic Friend, the divine Redeemer. With all this so familiar to our mind, we can acknowledge the great progress that has already been made, but there are still many who are not responding as they might to the invitation that the Lord extends to them at every Mass to come and be healed and strengthened by Him.

The new-found confidence of the faithful in approaching Christ in Holy Communion has prepared them to realize that they can join with Him in the offering of His Sacrifice. He became man to be our Mediator with God and it is especially in the Mass that He unites us with Himself in the worship of the heavenly Father. In the development of such active participation a new direction is given to our devotion. We must cherish the realization that God has first loved us, that the Son of God has become one of us, that He has united us with Himself, and that now we can enter into the presence of God confidently with the Son who is our High Priest and the Victim of our Sacrifice.

The development of the doctrine of the Mystical Body and the Eucharistic revival have thrown new light on the place of the laity in the Church and on the dignity of their vocation. The defense of the faith in the religious controversies of modern times had made necessary a special emphasis on the dignity of the teaching and ruling authorities in the Church. There has developed, as a result, a tendency on the part of the laity to look upon the Church as something outside themselves, an authority to which they are subject. An understanding of the true nature of the Mystical Body,

as we have described it, has made it clear that the Church is a living body in which the laity share in the entire life and full membership. The Eucharistic revival, in its own way, has thrown light on their dignity as "the holy people," called together by God's word, sharing in the life of Christ, active participants in the worship offered by the Church, Head and members, to the heavenly Father.

New avenues for the pursuit of perfection have been opened up to the laity. There is now no plausible reason for them to think of themselves as Christians of an inferior order, as those who have made some practical compromise with the world and have lacked a vocation to live a full Christian life and to pursue perfection. Their call to perfection is seen with special clarity in the current teaching on spiritual growth in marriage. Through an abundance of books and periodicals, through frequent sermons and conferences, and through such organizations and activities as the Christian Family Movement and Cana Conferences, new light is thrown on the true meaning of love between man and woman, on the dignity of Christian marriage as a sacrament, and on the married state as a consecrated way of life for mutual help toward greater sanctity.

It has also been made clearer in our time that the ordinary occupations of the laity are not to be thought of as merely secular, as activities entirely apart from their growth in holiness. Pope John XXIII has stated in his encyclical letter that a person should neither think that he has to abandon the activities of this world in order to strive for Christian perfection nor that he is necessarily endangering his dignity as a man and as a Christian when he attends to matters in the temporal order. Further, in speaking of the union of the laity with Christ in His Mystical Body, the Holy Father says: "Whence it is that if Christians are also joined in mind and heart with the most holy Redeemer when they apply themselves to temporal affairs, their work in a way is a

continuation of the labor of Jesus Christ Himself, drawing from it strength and redemptive power. . . . Human labor of this kind is so exalted and ennobled that it leads men engaged in it to spiritual perfection, and it can likewise contribute to the diffusion and propagation of the fruits of the Redemption to others. So also it results in leavening with the power of the Gospel the civilization in which we live and work." (Mater et Magistra)

In recent times the laity have been urged by the popes and the bishops to work for the reform of social institutions, so that these may become more humane, more in conformity with the will of the Creator, and that they may provide the freedom and human dignity, and the other conditions that make possible the living of a fully Christian life. In this effort at reform of the temporal order, effective work is generally carried out in groups and it also involves the cooperation of the Catholic faithful with others who are seeking the improvement of human institutions.

In the pastoral work of the Church the laity also have been called on to take a part. We rejoice in the dedicated labors of large numbers of lay persons in our Catholic schools and hospitals, in the Archdiocesan Councils, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the variety of guilds and the other organizations within our archdiocese. Moreover, many lay persons are devoting some years of their lives to the missionary apostolate, going to other parts of this country and to other lands to aid in the educational and charitable projects of the Church.

In the current renewal of the Christian life the growth of the various societies in which the laity are enlisted is one of the most encouraging signs. These societies should be especially alert to the stirrings of the Holy Ghost in the Church as we prepare for the coming Council. They should be alert to the various movements that make up the renewal, so that in the formation of their own members, their cooperation with each other,

and the results achieved in their apostolic work, they will be acting in concert with the Church and her divine Head.

In every way the spirit of the gospel must enter and give its quality to the existing life of the Church and renew with its evangelical vigor the individual soul of each Christian. The means for accomplishing this are at hand; they await the will to be used. The Council for its part will enunciate with a new clarity the dignity of the lay life, the vocation involved in it and the essential role the layman plays in the full life of the Church.

### **3. ADJUSTMENT OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE TO MODERN LIFE**

It may seem strange to some that words like change and reform, adjustment and adaptation are often used when the Church and the forthcoming Ecumenical Council are discussed. Certainly the Church, like her divine Founder and Head, is "ever the same . . . yesterday, to-day, and always"; ever giving the same apostolic witness of one Lord; ever professing the one Catholic Faith; ever renewing men in holiness through the same sacraments; ever showing herself as the faithful and constant spouse of her divine Bridegroom. In a very real and true sense then the Church is unchanging—she can never lose or deform that which the Apostles have left her or what our Lord requires of her. To this end Christ has promised his continuous presence in the Church through the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth.

Yet we must remember that the Church, like an organic body, develops and grows in the course of centuries, "is being built up," as St. Paul describes it. This growth is not only extensive, in the sense that new members are being constantly added to the Church, but in a true sense one can speak also of inner development. We mentioned earlier some of these developments taking place in the theology and in the spiritual and social

teachings of the Church in recent years. These developments do not reflect a new faith, they do not represent new moral or spiritual principles; rather do they demonstrate a more vigorous insight into faith and its implications. Pope John expresses this phenomenon of growth in the Church in his recent Apostolic Constitution when he writes: ". . . Just as we see the face of human society completely changed, so also does the Church appear to our eyes endowed with a changed and more perfect form . . . reinforced with a bastion of richer doctrine, resplendent with a brighter beauty of holiness." (*Humanae Salutis*) For this reason, we can properly apply the words "change" and "develop" to the Church's teaching on faith and morals, and still assert with complete truth that the faith and the moral teachings of the Church are ever the same and unchanging.

Besides the magisterial authority of the Church which passes on the apostolic faith, there is another important area of activity in which the Church is seen exercising her mission. And in this regard too we can speak with propriety of "change" and "reform", adjustment and adaptation. We know that the Church is a society whose members are men, that she carries out Christ's mission on earth in a milieu which is imperfect, changing and fallible. The methods which the Church uses to carry out her mission of sanctifying in truth, the means she employs of directing, teaching, and encouraging her members, are generally referred to as "the discipline of the Church." Although the modern connotation of "discipline" may seem to evoke unpleasant images of enforcement and punishment, such meaning is far from the true significance of this word. Its ecclesiastical implications are more akin to the ancient meaning of the word, "instruction". All matters of ecclesiastical discipline have at their root some pedagogical purpose—they are meant to teach. Under the general heading of discipline are such concerns as church polity, liturgical rules, marriage regulations, clerical order, and the like.

In these areas we can well speak of adapting and adjusting methods to a changing society. Since members of the Church are human with the imperfections and limitations of human nature, it is also acceptable to speak of "reform" within the Church. Although this word since the sixteenth century may seem to have unpleasant associations for Catholics, the word and the reality had been present in the activity of the Church from the earliest years, just as they have been since the sad events which divided Western Christendom. The important thing to remember with regard to reform is that it is done within the Church, within the framework of ecclesiastical authority, within the visible Body—it is the work of the Spirit sanctifying the Body. When it takes place outside this framework, it is not reform, but a wounding action on the Body of Christ, and so opposed to the work of the Spirit, no matter how lofty its motives.

When the Holy Father himself speaks of adaptation and adjustment of Church discipline to the modern world, it is this that he has in mind: "that the Church may show herself more and more capable of solving the problems of modern man." During the past century, indeed during the past decade we have seen many examples of such adjustment. Many of these examples might seem isolated to the casual observer, but they fall into general patterns of disciplinary, that is educative, reform. Most striking of these are, perhaps, the changes in liturgical discipline. From the instructions of St. Pius X encouraging more frequent Communion to the more recent "reforms" in the Holy Week Liturgy, the introduction of the "dialogue Mass", the changes in the Eucharistic fast and the revision and new forms of the missal and breviary, we have been experiencing the fruits of the Church's adaptation of liturgical discipline to modern man and to contemporary society. We must expect to see these and similar matters further extended in the discussions of the Council. It is important to realize that these changes do not reflect any "weakening" of the

Church, any attitude of "giving in to modern man's softness" as some might short-sightedly judge. The Church is in fact only adapting liturgical legislation to the present needs—both pedagogical and ascetic—of her members and to a changed and metropolitan society in which they must live. In similar manner, we might well expect to see some adaptations in the language and liturgical ceremonies as celebrated in the church of Africa and Asia, whose cultures are different from what we call Western civilization.

In these lands, also, as in the other areas of the world where the Church carries on Christ's mission of proclaiming his Gospel, there is room for many changes of method. In our time, and indeed even in recent months, we have seen how the Church has suffered in some newly independent areas because it has been identified in the minds of some with a former colonialism. While immense progress in mission training has been realized in the last years we must continually re-appraise our mission methods so as to make identification of this sort impossible in the future.

Then, too, the common responsibility of all the Church to share in the mission of Christ to all men must be realized now in a more concrete manner. We are members of the *Catholic* Church, universal and ecumenical; our horizons cannot be limited merely to the geographic area of our residence. This realization has prompted me to form the Missionary Society of St. James which in the past few years has produced such tangible fruits in areas of Peru and Bolivia. God has blessed this work abundantly and He will bless too the apostolic priests who have left their homes for this important ministry. He surely will favor in a special way the generous souls who have supported this truly Catholic apostolate. One important thing we have learned from our work in South America, and from a life-time's experience with the missions: we do not undertake the work of the Church anywhere in a patronizing fashion, indulgently

regarding those men to whom we preach as children, nor do we go either as bearers of a "superior" culture. We go as brothers to announce the glad tidings of our Lord's universal redemptive work, we go as fellow Christians to assist the clergy of the local Churches in their Catholic ministry.

Changes and adaptations in missionary methods also bring to mind other areas of instruction which in our modern age have been developing. New methods of catechetics are being proposed—so necessary in this age of unbalanced education and specialization. The growing percentage of those receiving higher learning and the decrease of family influence in religious education require compensating steps on the part of the Church to assure a knowledge of the Faith which is proportionate to the intellectual development of our students. New apostolic techniques must be found for this important work. The amazing educational potential of the press and television should be re-examined, especially in the light of the grave and deleterious effects these have on our people and the possibility they offer for good. For these last purposes Pope John appointed a special Secretariat for mass media to assist in the preparations for the Council, and this should find a creative and imaginative approach in this area commensurate with the opportunity it offers the Church.

Within the local parish there also is need of change. The moving face of our communities, resulting from what are popularly termed the exodus to suburbia, urban redevelopment, the affluent society and the other phenomena of this period, requires change within the parochial framework. Can we suppose that parish organizations—whose origins date from the last century and earlier—continue to be effective in contemporary society? Our current sociological concerns—the family, marriage, teen-agers—already point to newer forms of activity outside the structure of present organizations. In the manner in which Pope John speaks of the universal

Church, so must I confess, as shepherd of this archdiocese, how so many of our groups seem to have lost the Christian dynamic which once gave them purpose. Recent findings in social science can guide many new developments in the ordering of our parish life.

The popes of our century have constantly stressed the need for a Catholic laity who should actively assist their bishops in endeavors which are truly catholic. Within the parish and the local community there is ample opportunity and urgent need for the exercise of such an apostolate. We must hope that the Council would provide practical counsels from which our own zeal will structure new forms of parish life successfully meeting new challenges.

These are only some of the matters which are pertinent to our American society and our Catholic life in that society which deserve a careful study and re-appraisal. It is to such matters that the Holy Father refers when he indicates that the Council will consider "topics both doctrinal and practical . . . so that Christian institutions and precepts might be perfectly adapted to the multiple forms of life and may usefully serve the Mystical Body of Christ." His aspirations cover a wide area, including, "the sacraments and prayers of the Church, the discipline of morality, the works through which charity is exercised and the needy aided, the apostolate of the laity and the undertakings of the missions." Surely here there is room for the exercise of every apostolic effort and the fruitful use of every spiritual energy.

#### 4. THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE UNION OF CHRISTIANS

From that moment early in 1959 when Pope John first announced his intention of convoking a council, he has indicated the hope that this meeting would be an instrument for the union of all Christians. In fact his

initial statement so attracted the interest of Christians everywhere, and so stimulated discussion, that many thought it the prime or only reason for the forthcoming Council. Statements during the past three years have dissolved that misunderstanding and yet, even more significantly, have reasserted the intentions of the Pope that the work of the Council be directed in a special fashion toward preparing the way for such union.

Six months after the first announcement Pope John wrote: *"It was under the guidance of this comforting hope, which encouraged Us very much, that We publicly announced the plan to summon an ecumenical council. It is our hope that those who behold it but who are separated from this Apostolic See, will receive it as a gentle invitation to seek and find that unity for which Jesus Christ prayed so ardently to his Heavenly Father."*

So again in the formal document convoking the Second Vatican Council, he insists . . .

*"that this forthcoming Council should set forth more fully those points of doctrine and exhibit that example of fraternal charity whose realization will encourage the more those Christians who are separated from this Apostolic See towards that same unity and will prepare the way for them to attain that unity."*

This hope of the Holy Father and the work of the Council is in a true sense the culmination of the hopes and work of the Popes and Church for the past century, and especially since World War II.

For the past century the wondrous activity of the divine Soul of the Mystical Body, the Holy Ghost, has become manifest more and more in a divided Christendom. That modern phenomenon known as the Ecumenical Movement, which embraces today the vast majority of Protestant Christians and Orthodox churches and

which has as its goal and quest the perfect unity of all who profess Jesus Christ as God and Savior, reflects the activity of the Holy Spirit in directing these sincere Christians toward the true source of unity. The Catholic Church for its part has encouraged these groups in their quest, when directed along the road which leads to unity in faith, worship and apostolic ordering. Pope Leo XIII voiced his yearning for the perfect union of all Christians in many encyclical letters and called Catholics to work and pray for this holy purpose. Over sixty years ago he said: "Our eyes may not see the union of Churches which we are striving for, but let us not rashly regard this unceasing effort—by a sentiment unworthy of a Christian—as a vain utopia." In the decades that have passed since Leo, the vision of union has been revealed even more vividly and the eyes of the present Holy Father can see its realization as a vision rising before an expectant mankind.

The establishment by Pope John of the "Secretariat for Fostering the Unity of Christians", was truly an historic milestone on the road toward union. This secretariat, which numbers among its members many eminent Catholic ecumenists, has been invaluable in promoting efforts in the apostolate of unity. Through it, exchanges with Christian groups are already being made and these communications already show signs of increased understanding between Catholics and their separated neighbors. Its activity during these last two years will enable the Bishops of the Council, in the words of Pope John, "to prepare the way for them to attain that unity."

In our own archdiocese we have been greatly gratified by the growing ecumenical spirit among our priests and among so many of our dissident Christian brothers. Indeed many Protestant clergymen and not a few Orthodox leaders have been engaged in serious theological conversation with priests of the archdiocese. These encounters we have approved and endorsed in the warm hope that they will foster mutual understanding

and true Christlike charity in our community and will lay a groundwork for ultimate union. These meetings have revealed that, although there are definite areas of theological divergence, many of our hostilities and causes for separation are in reality a vast network of misunderstanding which only patient love can cut away. They also highlight the truth which the Popes are ever wont to utter: the work of unity is the work of *every* Christian, a work of prayer, of holy example, of apostolic love. Union is prepared and effected not only in ecumenical councils: it is born and grows in the pluralistic neighborhood. In this connection I shall soon announce the formation of an Archdiocesan Ecumenical Committee made up of priests and laymen to further this important apostolic effort in accordance with papal directives. While we must be patient and not expect too much too soon, we must also see to it that no labor of ours is left undone which will help men find the religious unity in Christ for which He himself so fervently prayed.

The Council which will convene this coming October will see the gatherings of bishops from all parts of the world and from all families of the Universal Church. Bishops from the Catholic Churches of the East will join with the Latin bishops in St. Peter's Basilica on the Feast of the Maternity of Our Blessed Lady. Churches of the Armenian Rite, the Ukrainian Rite, the Maronite Rite, the Melkite Rite, and the many other sister churches which adorn the Catholic Body will be represented. As we celebrate the Eucharistic Liturgy which will solemnly open the Council, these will present an ample spectacle before the world of the serene unity which the Church treasures and reveals. But this unity even then will not be extensively perfect, not until *all* Christian bodies unite in perfect harmony of faith and join in that awesome Mystery of Faith which is both the symbol of perfect unity and its divine cause—the Holy Eucharist.

## V.

*The Individual Christian and the Council*

From what we have already said it is evident the approaching Council is an event of extraordinary importance for the entire Church. It would be a mistake, however, to think of the Council merely as a gathering of clerics, and to conclude that its deliberations will have significance merely within the limited areas in which bishops and priests work together as ministers of the Church. The Holy Father has repeatedly stressed the part which the Council must play in the restoration of Christian life *throughout* the Church. As we prepare for the Council, therefore, we should all be conscious of our individual responsibility for its success, and we should all look forward to the good effects in years to come of the measures of doctrinal clarification and disciplinary reform which the Council will be divinely destined to bring about.

While the Church is an organic whole, functioning in a uniform and coherent manner throughout the world, it is no less a quality of the Church's institution to be adaptable to the needs of particular nations and groups, and to channel its influences into the souls of individual men. Membership in the Church does not consist in external conformity to church laws and customs, nor in mere association with the Church's visible structure. Even a superficial survey of the Church's history, particularly during the last century, will reveal the power of the Church in the lives of its individual members, and the orientation towards man's ultimate goal of eternal happiness which the Church is divinely ordained to bring about. As the materialistic trend of modern times led to a progressive downgrading of society in the name of freedom of its individual members, the Church increasingly stressed the obligations of the individual to the community, and the impact on the community of the

way its individual members think and live. More recently, as the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction towards downgrading the individual in favor of Leviathan governments, the Church has reaffirmed the value of the individual man, and issued repeated warnings of the harmful consequences of totalitarian philosophies of life.

It has made a great difference to the world, during the century that has elapsed since the last Ecumenical Council that the Church has survived the forces which so often seemed powerful and ready to destroy it. What would have happened, for example, if the only voices to be raised against the abuses of the Industrial Revolution had been those of Karl Marx and his atheistic followers? What might have been the effect on human minds, already prepared for secularistic influences by two centuries of rebellion against the teachings of divine revelation, if Leo XIII had not pointed out that the principles of Christianity provide a far more effective means of restraining human selfishness than the principles of Marxian socialism? What might have happened during the dark days of the 1930's, as godless states prepared to rush into the vacuum created by widespread economic depression, if Pius XI had not thrown the influences of the Church against them, and presented the Christian philosophy of society as the remedy for social unrest? What might be the condition of the world today if the voice of Pius XII had been silent as a frightful world war and its disastrous effects were threatening to destroy the very foundations of religious and moral life?

People of all faiths have come to recognize the power of the Church for good, and the need of that determined opposition to atheism and immorality which the Church has been able to sustain, while so many other religious and social agencies have suffered from confusion within their own ranks, and from the weakness of

policy which follows upon ideological division. The Church as an organic whole has meaning, therefore, for individual men; the Church can never subordinate the welfare of its members to concern for its own survival. The charge has sometimes been made against the Church that it has sought to perpetuate its acquired rights by standing in the way of the progress of human society. Anyone who examines the facts of history can find out for himself that much of the Church's strength has arisen from its ability to follow the strong currents of social and economic evolution, and to adapt its policies to the changing circumstances of men's lives.

It is true, nonetheless, that the Church moves slowly where there is question of major reform or change. It is likewise true that the forces which stand in the way of change are often identified with doctrinaire speculation and reactionary policy. To welcome change for its own sake is as wrong as to condemn change as essentially destructive. Sooner or later the Church always finds the constructive synthesis of opposing tendencies. As the Council approaches, we should pray that God may inspire those who will direct its deliberations with a will to keep what is useful in the traditions of the past, and at the same time to turn from the past when new orientations of policy will be needed for the safeguarding of changeless truths.

Another charge often made against the Church is that it has stressed organizational uniformity and external observances to the detriment of the inner life which alone can bring men's souls into relation with God. Here again, we must distinguish between programs of action which are directed towards immediate goals and the broad and constructive point of view which should dominate the formulation of policy. Much of the program of the Council will be concerned with the life of the Church as an institution and with external relations among different groups within the Church. Undoubtedly

the Council will issue directives which will have the force of law, and will point out certain defects in the structure and functioning of the Church which stand in need of correction.

One must not infer from this concern for externals that the interests of the Church are identified exclusively with its visible organization. The very heart and substance of religious life is sustained within the souls of individual men. It is because the Church, as an external society, can help men to live in union with God and thus help them to attain their eternal reward that its existence as Christ intended it is justified.

Our Blessed Lord often told his followers that they should worship his Father in spirit. His most scathing condemnations were directed at the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who found the essence of perfection in merely external fidelity to the details of the law. For the very reason that so much of the life of the Church is necessarily summed up on the provisions of human legislation, even Christians themselves are in danger of seeking religious perfection in the discharge of duties which can be externally observed.

Nothing could be more alien to the spirit of Christianity. We belong truly to Christ only when we are interiorly identified with Him through the life of grace. Prayer, the lifting up of the mind and heart to God, must provide the inner substance of every other religious work and every organized project of Catholic action. We should reflect seriously on the need of inner conversion as we prepare ourselves mentally for the changes which the Council may be expected to bring about in the external life of the Church. Is it not of the essence of the Church that it should be holy in the lives of its members? And does not holiness of life, as an objective of the Church's apostolate, suggest the essential difference between the world-wide mission of the Church and the competing program of universal domination which Communism proposes as its goal?

Civil governments must stop short of the inner lives of their subjects. The Church, on the other hand, fails radically if it does not effect within men's souls the transformation that will correspond with their eternal profession of conformity with God's law. It is through its relation with the minds and hearts of men that the Church breaks the barriers of its merely institutional structure. It is important, therefore, that the Church be thought of as a divinely directed movement whose external circumstances are but the necessary condition of its effectiveness. It is wrong to think of the Church as a human society which is in only accidental relation with the sources of grace.

This excessively human concept of the Church has led many non-Catholics to look outside the Church for the spirit of religious life, and to think of God's grace as passing above and beyond the Church, rather than as passing to men's souls through the very functioning of the Church. We realize to the full the potential of our membership in the Church only when we become interiorly transformed by grace. We are Catholics in the weakest sense, and perhaps only in name, when we harden our hearts against the divine grace which the Church stands ready to channel into our souls.

Beyond every particular project of the Council, implied in every measure of reform or restoration which the Council will initiate, is the dominating purpose of transforming men's souls through grace. Perhaps the souls of men have never been in such dire need of this interior renewal. A kind of schizophrenia has come over great multitudes of men who lack the solidity of character which is brought about by the cohesive force of Christian principles. It is not uncommon to find people *living* as Christians without *thinking* as Christians. Many people find the solution of the problems of life in shuttling from one attitude to another. They conform with inconsistent ease to the demands of mutually exclusive situations. They defend the Church openly, while in-

teriorly repudiating its implications for their personal lives. They may even plan ambitious programs of apostolic action while remaining attached to sensual pleasures in a way inconsistent with the requirements of Christian discipline.

There are many today who are not interiorly converted, even while they are externally identified as Catholics, and even as they receive the sacraments which are divinely instituted to establish and increase their interior life of union with God. How else can we explain the indifference of some as compared with the fervor and zeal of others? How else can we interpret the rejection by some of the clearest implications of God's law, while others, within the same external framework of the Church, rise to the heights of holiness?

Every Christian, in his own interior life, should mirror the unity and the holiness of the Church. There was no division within the Church as Christ founded it; there should be no division within the souls of individual Christians. There was no compromise with evil in the Church as Christ founded it; there should be no compromise with evil in the souls of those to whom the Church brings the blessings of divine grace.

The Council, summoned after nearly a century to continue the work of unifying the Church which was interrupted by the events of 1870, demands from every Christian a deepening sense of responsibility for the unity of the Church. This responsibility must be borne especially by those who are already within the visible limits of the Church. The unity which, God willing, will be recognized as a historical fact in years to come, must find its foundation and support in the unity of charity within the souls of all who acknowledge and submit to the jurisdiction of the vicar of Christ.

There must be no questioning of the authority of the Church to point out the implications of the truths of divine revelation. There must be no attempts to find justification, in the name of Christ, of ways of living

which the Church has declared to be inconsistent with the teaching of Christ. There must be no rejection by those who call themselves Christians of the principles of Christian morality which are authentically proclaimed by the Church. Interior conversion, within the souls of individual Christians, must be the beginning of the world-wide restoration in Christ towards which the efforts of the Council will be directed.

This has always been the message of the Supreme Pontiffs who have been entrusted by Christ with the care of the faithful. How clearly it stands out in the writings of the Popes of the last century, from Pius IX who endured a long self-imposed isolation, to John XXIII who moves about with surprising freedom among the throngs of people who travel to the tombs of the Apostles! As Leo XIII proclaimed the doctrine of social justice, as Pius X reaffirmed the validity of divine revelation as a source of truth, as Benedict XV spread the balm of charity over the wounds of a war-stricken Europe, as Pius XI resisted the aggression of atheistic rulers against the divinely ordained rights of the Church, as Pius XII presented the truths of faith as the foundation of the Christian way of life, the world has learned to look to the Holy See as the symbol of the Church's concern for the souls of men and her untiring zeal for the realization of the peace of Christ.

Today, as our Holy Father summons the new Council, it is comforting to sense the reaction of God-fearing men of all nations to his simple and forthright appeal for a return to the Christianity whose essential qualities were found in the life and teaching of Christ Himself. It would be wrong to overlook the fact that this appeal is primarily to Catholics. For the evils of schism which have brought separation among those who call themselves Christians, we find the matching evils of pride and selfishness among those who have remained loyal to the jurisdiction of the true Church. We must put our own house in order if we would make possible

the return of those whom we regard as wanderers. We must present to the world the image of the Church as Christ founded it if we would ask recognition from those who have sought Christ elsewhere because they have been unable to find Him in the lives of Catholics.

Only God can know why Christianity has not retained over the centuries the unity which was so clearly indicated at its beginning. Of this, however, we may be certain: when the history of the times has been written, it will be seen that much good has resulted from movements of separation that were so regrettable in their origins, and so far from theological justification in their doctrinal presentation. If God has permitted the division of Christianity, He has likewise decreed that it will serve his purposes in the building of the heavenly Jerusalem. We cannot doubt that those who have made their earthly pilgrimage over the paths of schism have contributed much to the strengthening of human society, to the ennobling of Christian ideals, and to the building of the City of God. Nothing that helps men to love one another and to work with one another generously and constructively can be without its divine direction towards the victory of truth.

Even among those who have not recognized the coming of Christ, in their perpetuation of the natural vigor of God's law, in the profound philosophical speculations of the religions of the East, in every movement of men's minds towards the truth which they are divinely enabled to grasp, we find some movement of the Spirit, something intended for integration into the full Christian synthesis which will represent the teaching of Christ.

In her history the Church has had her encounters with heresy and schism. We are compelled to state that God has made these encounters fruitful and through them the Church has come to a better understanding of herself. While heresy and schism are not desirable in themselves, they are the way so many of the people of

God have sought his light that we cannot exclude his holy purpose working in them toward the self-renewal of the Church. In the reasons that have led to these decisions we can often find evidence of defects and human failings, the knowledge of which can assist in improving our own efforts in the work of salvation.

Altogether then, we must emphasize the importance of sincere personal renewal and individual identification, with the aims of the Holy Father in the work of the Council. Even while conscious of this, however, we must recall our corporate unity in Christ which in no sense makes our struggle a lonely one but joins us intimately one with another, and all in Him.

## VI. *Conclusion*

We have seen the providential place which the concept of a Council has assumed in the life of the Church and we have examined as well the special aspirations of the Holy Father for this Second Vatican Council in October. We have seen moreover how every Christian must accept responsibility for his part in this gathering and no person called to membership in the Body of Christ can conscientiously set it aside. It remains now merely to urge all hearts to patient prayer and penance so that purified of our iniquities we may be worthy of God's direction and blessing on our efforts for his glory.

The unforgettable words of good Pope John speak to us as he calls "the whole Christian people to direct all their thoughts to the Council and to pour forth their powerful prayers to Almighty God, that He may benignly guide the great undertaking, now so imminent, and may grant through his power that it be accomplished with due dignity." In a particular fashion the Pontiff speaks to children and to the ill and the suffering: "As for children, the power of their innocence and prayers

before the throne of God is not comprehended fully by any man. We are sure that the sufferings of the sick and the infirm, as well as their life, so like a sacrifice, through the power of the cross of Christ will be transformed into a powerful supplication, into salvation, into a font of holier life for the universal Church."

As we enter the Lenten season and our attentions are turned with new vigor toward our spiritual necessities, we must find place this year for special prayer and renewed sacrifice for this enduring intention of the Holy Father. He has asked the clergy to offer their recitation of the Breviary; he has invited everyone to offer the Rosary of Our Lady. From Lourdes, I have learned that each *decade* of every rosary has been given its own special intention until the end of the Council. The first decade is for the Holy Father, President of the Council. The second decade is for all Preparatory Commissions. The third decade is for all the bishops and fathers of the Council. The fourth decade, for all the theologians of the Council. The fifth decade for the unity of all Christians. Let us in this archdiocese undertake to offer our rosary each day for the intentions as we have outlined them.

It is not too soon for us even now to prepare for the conclusion of the Council. Let each of us be ready to apply the decisions of the Council to himself. There will doubtless be some changes which will affect us in our life of worship, of instruction, and social action. Let none of us have a false sense of independence by which he may think himself excused from the universal application of the decrees of the Council. These decrees will be binding on us and we will willingly accept them; only those who do not believe in God can undertake to live by their own rules. My intention is to convoke a Synod in the Archdiocese of Boston some time after the close of the Council, so that we may make special application here of those things which the Fathers of the Council call to the attention of Christian peoples.

“By professing the truth in love, let us grow in every way in union with Christ who is the Head.”

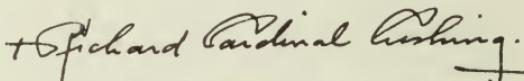
We cannot be blind to the special perils which beset the very idea of religion here in our own land. We could tend to regard it as useful rather than necessary; we could emphasize the service that religion gives to society rather than the service by which it offers society to God. We could also allow ourselves to be beguiled by the numbers of those who flock to our churches. We must now inquire rather how ready this multitude is to accept the message which it is the duty of Christ’s Church to impart. We must never forget that our Christian hope transcends by far the greatest claims that any civil or social loyalty can make upon us. Let us therefore never confuse or make identical the City of Man and the City of God. If the Word became flesh in the City of Man, it was that we might learn through Him how to elevate and finally to transform it.

Finally, let us keep always in mind that all our tremendous activity, all the many sacrifices, all the prayers offered for this Council are not what brings about its fruit. It is the spirit of God in total and awesome freedom which gives us every gift. From the beginning, it must be a divine grace which prompts every initiative that is from God. As Pope John has said, “We have felt that it was God’s lofty command that caused the thought of celebrating an Ecumenical Council to rise like the flower of an early and unexpected springtime within us soon after our elevation to the Pontifical Throne.” If in our knowledge of God’s holy design, we learn more confidently to cast our cares upon Him, we shall have understood the meaning of God in history.

God knows us and finds us even in our forgetfulness and alienation, and He draws us by his love to seek Him. This is his pattern for each of his children, it is his pattern whereby he brings the members of the Body of Christ by constant renewal nearer to the Head, close to uncreated Love. The time of renewal is here. What will

be spoken in collective terms by the Fathers of the Council must ultimately find acceptance by each individual soul. Each soul finds its way to judgment in the loneliness of death. It is the divine love accompanying the journey that can make the transition from life to life our final triumph.

Let us then join our prayers with those of the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph and all the saints. Let our prayers arise as incense before the Almighty Trinity and One true God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. May I ask in true supplication of you, my sons and daughters in the Faith, that you pray for me, as I go to represent the Church of Boston in the Second Vatican Council. May God bless you and me alike in these days when our common prayer is offered for the fulfillment of the tasks as yet unfinished for which our Lord founded his Church. May He bring us ever closer together, in the unity of faith and the bond of love. God bless us all.



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